



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Bozeman, MT 59718

March 5, 2014

To: Governor's Office, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704  
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:  
Director's Office      Parks Division      Lands Section      FWP Commissioners  
Fisheries Division      Legal Unit      Wildlife Division Design & Construction  
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed "Renewal of Agricultural Leases on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area". This proposal regards the renewal of existing agricultural leases for the next 5-year lease period (2014 – 2018) on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area near Townsend, MT.

This Draft EA may be obtained from FWP at the address provided above or viewed on FWP's Internet website:  
<http://www.fwp.mt.gov>.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the attached proposal. The public comment period will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 19, 2014. Comments should be sent to the following:

Fred Jakubowski  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT 59644

Or e-mailed to: [fjakubowski@mt.gov](mailto:fjakubowski@mt.gov)

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers  
Region Three Supervisor

# **Draft Environmental Assessment**

## **An Environmental Assessment Regarding the Renewal of Agricultural Leases On The Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area**



***Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks***

**Draft Environmental Assessment  
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

**PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Renew six existing agricultural leases for a 5-year period (2014 – 2018) on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area near Townsend, MT.
2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has authority to administer leases on the Canyon Ferry WMA under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. R12AC60042 with the Bureau of Reclamation for the Operation and Maintenance of the CFWMA.
3. **Name of project:** “An Environmental Assessment Regarding the Renewal of Agricultural Leases on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area”
4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Not Applicable
5. **Anticipated Schedule:** Not Applicable

Estimated Construction Commencement Date:

Estimated Completion Date:

Current Status of Project Design (% complete):

6. **Location affected by proposed action:**

East side of the Canyon Ferry WMA, north of Townsend, see Appendix A for a location map and Appendix B for a map of the leased parcels at the WMA. The property is owned by the U.S. Bureau of reclamation and is leased by MFWP for the protection of waterfowl and wildlife habitat.

7. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>648.2</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>148.1(nesting</u>
			<u>cover &amp; shelterbelts)</u>

**8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) **Permits:** Not Applicable

(b) **Funding:** FWP would establish an annual lease rate based on results of surveys conducted by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Service of private agricultural land leases in Montana.

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

Bureau of Reclamation  
(See Item 2 above)

Land Managing Agency

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:**

Renew existing agricultural leases on the WMA which are designed to produce agricultural crops and provide important wildlife habitat. There are 6 leases which are solely hay and grain leases and one bee yard on the WMA.

**10. Alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action.** Under this alternative, the agricultural leases would not be renewed.

**Alternative B: Proposed Action.** This alternative would renew 6 agricultural leases to four individuals and one bee yard lease on the east side of Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (WMA) totaling approximately 650 acres of cropland. Each lease is managed in a hay - grain rotation, and all leases are required to retain a specified acreage of standing grain for annual wildlife food plots. Food plots, grain fields, and irrigated hay fields will directly benefit pheasants, deer, and other wildlife enhancing habitats associated with the WMA. The bee yard lease involves approximately 0.50 acres.

Parcel #	Number of Acres
45A	224
47	76
48	69.1
62A & 63A	81.4
73A	88.4
90	156.3

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No new impacts are anticipated for ongoing agricultural activities. There are no cumulative or secondary effects on land resources. The leases to be renewed are existing leases and have been cultivated farm ground for many decades.

2. <u>AIR</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects on air resources.

3. <u>WATER</u>	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other:		X				

No direct impacts to water resources, including Canyon Ferry Reservoir, are expected. There are no cumulative or secondary effects on water resources.

4. <b><u>VEGETATION</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in?</b>						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		X				

The renewal of the agricultural leases will not change the existing diversity or abundance of plant communities at the WMA. There are no cumulative or secondary effects on vegetation resources.



<b>5. <u>FISH /WILDLIFE</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				
j. Other:		X				

Farming and associated set aside crops are expected to be beneficial for pheasants, deer and other wildlife. There are no cumulative or secondary effects on fish/wildlife resources.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

<b>6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects on the human environment in relation to noise or electrical effects.

<b>7. <u>LAND USE</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects on land use in the area. The leases to be renewed are existing leases and have been cultivated farm ground for many decades.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects in relation to Risk/Health Hazards.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

The agricultural leases provide opportunity for local producers to raise crops and generate income within the WMA providing additional benefit to the local community. There are no cumulative or secondary effects in relation to impacts on the local community.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects in relation to impacts on public services, taxes or utilities.

<b>11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

There would be no changes to existing recreational opportunities at the WMA if the agricultural leases were renewed by MFWP. There are no cumulative or secondary effects on aesthetics/recreation.

<b>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

There are no cumulative or secondary effects on Cultural/Historical Resources.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Renewal of these agricultural leases is not expected to have any significant impacts. No public controversy is anticipated if the agricultural leases were renewed by MFWP.

**2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

Not Applicable

**PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

These agricultural leases have been in place for many years and have been managed to produce agricultural crops including grain and hay. Additionally, areas adjacent to these croplands have been developed for wildlife cover and food including set-aside grain, shelterbelts, and nesting cover for upland birds. This has been a very successful program for the lessees who produce a commodity and for the public that uses the area for wildlife viewing and hunting.

**PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**1. Public Involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: Townsend Star and Helena Independent Record
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be available to the neighboring landowners and interested parties as requested to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts.

**2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for (14) fourteen days following the publication of the first legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 19, 2014 and can be mailed to the address below:

Fred Jakubowski  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT 59644

Or e-mailed to: [fjakubowski@mt.gov](mailto:fjakubowski@mt.gov)

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No.**

**If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

An EIS is not required. An EA is the proper level of analysis for this project because there are no significant negative impacts caused by or through these leases.

- 2. Preparer:**

Fred Jakubowski  
Acting Wildlife Biologist – FWP  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT 59644  
406-266-3367

- 3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

- a. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Wildlife Division
- b. United States Bureau of Reclamation: Canyon Ferry office



## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area

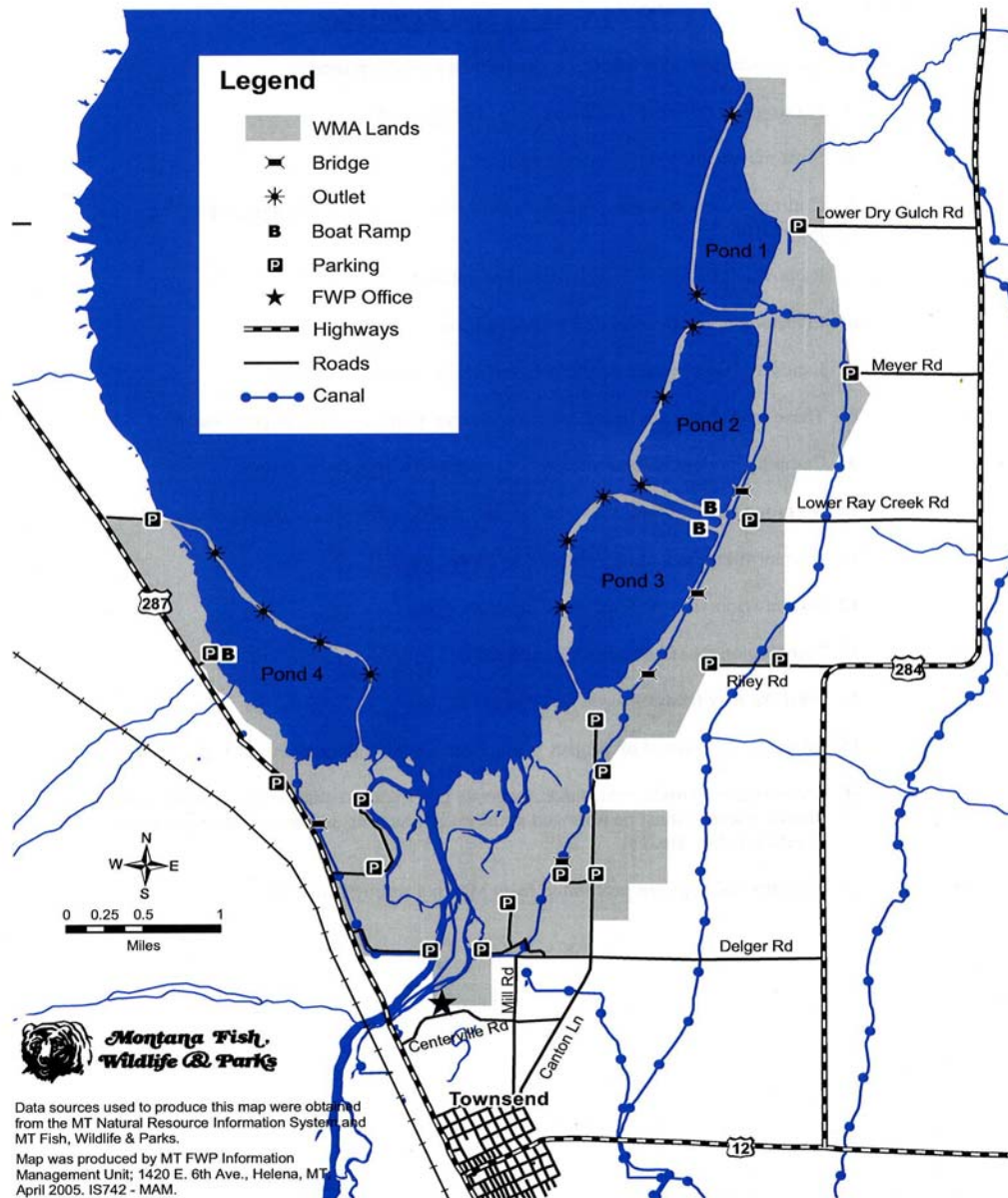


Figure 1. Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, Townsend, Montana. Agricultural leases occur on the east side of the Wildlife Management Area

## APPENDIX B

